

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /082 W

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R 150858Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6558

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 11347

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, RP, ME

SUBJECT: ALLEGED GOP/MNLF CEASE FIRE AGREEMENT

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUMMARY: ACCORDING GOP-DISSEMINATED PRESS REPORTS, MUSLIM REBEL ORGANIZATION MNLF HAS ACCEPTED GOVERNMENT CEASEFIRE PROPOSAL. REPORT (WHICH SHOULD BE REGARDED WITH UTMOST SKEPTICISM) STATES THAT MNLF ACCEPTANCE CONVEYED TO PALACE BY FORMER JUDGE ABDUL HAMID LUCMAN, AFTER ENDORSEMENT BY BOTH MNLF "CENTRAL COMMITTEE" AND REBEL RANK AND FILE IN MINDANAO/SULU. THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT LUCMAN (WHO SERVED ON MNLF DELEGATION AT JANUARY 1974 JIDDA TALKS) HAS DEFECTED TO GOP SIDE, BUT HIS DECISION PROBABLY INDIVIDUAL. STORY THAT MNLF HAS ACCEPTED GOP CEASEFIRE TERMS IS PATENTLY UNLIKELY AND APPEARS TO BE NO MORE THAN LATEST PUBLICITY GIMMICK DESIGNED TO DIVIDE AND CONFUSE MUSLIM OPINION, BOTH IN MINDANAO AND IN MIDDLE EAST.

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LATEST REPORTS FROM MINDANAO INDICATE THAT HOSTILITIES

THERE ARE IN FACT IN ANOTHER PERIOD OF CYCLICAL UPSWING.
END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING AUGUST 14 PALACE PRESS RELEASE, MNLF (MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT) HAS ACCEPTED GOP CEASEFIRE PROPOSAL. ACCEPTANCE CONVEYED TO PRESIDENT MARCOS BY JUDGE ABDUL HAMID LUCMAN WHO IS DESCRIBED AS MNLF LEGAL ADVISER AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER NEWLY ARRIVED FROM LIBYA AND SABAH VIA SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. REPORT ASSERTS THAT AGREEMENT TO CEASEFIRE ENDORSED BY BOTH MNLF CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND BY REBEL RANK AND FILE IN MINDANAO AND SULU.

2. PRESS RELEASE ON ALLEGED CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT FOLLOWED INITIAL MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT MARCOS AND LUCMAN (WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY SULU AREA MILITARY COMMANDER, ADMIRAL ESPALDON AND EXECUTIVE SECRETARY MELCHOR). RELEASE STATES LUCMAN WILL AGAIN MEET WITH PRESIDENT MARCOS OVER NEXT FEW DAYS TO DISCUSS "MODALITIES FOR AUTONOMY AND THE CREATION OF AN INTERNAL FORCE." (REFERENCE TO "INTERNAL FORCE" NOT EXPLAINED BY PRESS.)

3. COMMENT: POL COUNSELOR AND VISITING DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF INR ENCOUNTERED LUCMAN AT LUNCH HOSTED BY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY MELCHOR ON AUGUST 14. MELCHOR EXPLAINED PLANS TO SURFACE LUCMAN WITH NEWS OF CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT BUT DODGED QUESTION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT CEASEFIRE WOULD ACTUALLY TAKE PLACE. LUCMAN (WHOSE ENGLISH APPEARED LIMITED, ESPECIALLY WHEN DISCUSSING SENSITIVE TOPICS) DENIGRATED POPULARITY OF MNLF CHAIRMAN NUR MISUARI, CLAIMING HE HAD ONLY ONE HUNDRED LOYAL FOLLOWERS. MELCHOR SAID GOP IS CONSIDERING ALLOWING MUSLIMS TO HAVE SEPARATE MILITARY FORCE OF UP TO 100 MEN PER PROVINCE (THERE ARE 22 PROVINCES IN MINDANAO-SULU) WHICH IS PRESUMABLY "INTERNAL FORCE" REFERRED TO BY PRESS.

4. ACCORDING AVAILABLE BIO DATA, LUCMAN IS A FORMER JOLO MUNICIPAL JUDGE AND WAS A RATHER RECENT RECRUIT TO THE MNLF CAUSE. HE WAS ON MNLF TEAM AT JIDDA LAST JANUARY AND ALTHOUGH A FAIRLY SIGNIFICANT LEADER, HE
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IS NOT (AS ALLEGED BY PRESS) "SECOND-RANKING MAN IN MNLF." IT SEEMS MOST LIKELY THAT HIS DEFECTION IS AN INDIVIDUAL MATTER AND THAT THE ALLEGED ACCEPTANCE OF THE CEASEFIRE BY THE MNLF IS NOTHING MORE THAN THE LATEST GOP PUBLICITY GIMMICK DESIGNED TO DIVIDE AND CONFUSE MUSLIMS IN MINDANAO AND IN THE MIDDLE EAST. (MELCHOR, IN FACT, SAID LUCMAN WOULD NOT RETURN TO SOUTH, INDICATING HIS DEFECTION IS ISOLATED EVENT.) RECENT REPORTS

FROM MINDANAO/SULU INDICATE THAT FIGHTING HAS BEEN IN PERIOD OF CYCLICAL UPSWING SINCE MID-JULY, WITH AMBUSHINGS, GRENADINGS AND ASSORTED BLOODSHED REPORTED FROM ALL THREE SECTORS - SULU, COTABATO AND LANA O PROVINCES. WHEN CEASEFIRE FAILS TO MATERIALIZE, GOP WILL, OF COURSE, CLAIM THAT IT HAS BEEN SABOTAGED BY "MISUARI FACTION" OF MNLF AND ITS FOREIGN FRIENDS. SULLIVAN

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